Dr. *Johnson's*

LETTER

TO

Mr. *Dickinson*

In Defence of *Ariſtocles* to *Authades*.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A LETTER TO Mr. JONATHAN DICKINSON, In Defence of *Ariſtocles* to *Authades*, Concerning the Sovereignty & Promiſes Of GOD.

From SAMUEL JOHNSON, D.D.

GOD is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him. St. Joh. 1 Ep. 4. 16.

The LORD is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe as ſome Men count Slackneſs, but is long ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance. St. Pet. 2 Ep. 3. 9.

Et refellere ſine pertinaciâ, & refelli ſine Iracundiâ, parati ſumus. *Cic.* Tuſc. Diſp. L. 2. §. 2.

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MDCCXLVII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Dr. *Johnſon* to Mr. *Dickinſon.*

SIR,

WHEN I conſider the Genius and Temper of our Holy Religion, which breathes nothing but Humility, Meekneſs, Benevolence and Charity, together with Truth, Integrity, Candor and Well-meaning, and in a Word, every Thing that is amiable and advantageous in Society, as well as honourable to Almighty GOD; I am apt to wonder that there ſhould be any Diſputes at all about it, or any one Article of it: But I am ſurprized and grieved that in the Management of any Diſpute that may happen to ariſe, through the Frailty of our Nature, there ſhould be any Temper indulged that too manifeſtly ſavours of much Self-Sufficiency, and of much Malevolence and Bitterneſs of Spirit, or that any Method ſhould be uſed that has too obvious a Tendency to lead many of the honeſt and well-meaning People into Miſtakes, who cannot be expected to be able to guard againſt falacious Reaſonings, or cloſely to attend to the real Merits of the Cauſe. ——. If they go into any groſly wrong Notions, or groundleſs and uncharitable Separations, it is we that miſlead them by ſuch Practices, and it is we that muſt anſwer for the fatal Effects of them; and it muſt be ſaid upon theſe melancholly Occaſions, *Theſe Sheep, what have they done?*

It is our Buſineſs to watch with the utmoſt Tenderneſs over the Flock of CHRIST, and to take the greateſt Care that we

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do by no Means ſay or do, any Thing that may tend to lead them into any wrong Apprehenſions of GOD, or any unchriſtian Tempers one towards another, ſince *we watch for their Souls as thoſe that muſt give an Account.* But how, I beſeech you Sir, can we expect to give a good Account of our Miniſtry, if in the Courſe of it, and eſpecially in the moſt public Manner, we have uſed Means that have a natural Tendency to inſpire harmleſs, but unthinking People with a venemous Spirit of Uncharitableneſs, by leading them into very wrong Notions of the beſt of BEINGS, or of his Goſpel, or one another, and quite beſides the true State of the Argument in any Diſpute that may happen to ariſe among us ?—— If we teach them to believe in a GOD that does not mean as he ſays, and that ſecretly deſigns the Miſery of his Creatures, while he requires Conditions of their Happineſs, which it is impoſſible for them to perform, how can we engage them to love him, or expect in them any Sincerity, Well-meaning, Fair-dealing, or Benevolence, or any Thing but the utter Reverſe of theſe, either toward us or one another ?— I am ſenſible that we are too apt upon theſe unhappy Occaſions, to aim at the Appearance of *Victory*, rather than *Truth* : —— But I hope I can truly ſay, that I am vaſtly more concerned leaſt the Honour of GOD, and the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, and the Reputation of our own Order as Miniſters of that holy Religion, ſhould ſuffer through our ill Management, than which of us ſhould be thought to have the better of the Argument !

It is, Sir, with great Reluctance that I would admit of any diſadvantageous Apprehenſions either of your good Senſe or Well-meaning : But really, when I read your *Vindication of ſovereign Grace*, I confeſs, I am ſtumbled, and there ariſes in my Mind a Struggle between my Opinion of the one and the other.— I have too much Opinion of your good Senſe to imagine that you can think there is any juſt Reaſoning in the greateſt Part of this Pamphlet of your's ; and yet I cannot bear to imagine that you would knowingly, and on Purpoſe lead inconſiderate People into a wrong Notion of the Truth and Right of the Caſe.—— Now, Sir, I beg of you to help me out in this Struggle ; for I do honeſtly aſſure you that I am heartily willing to put the beſt Conſtruction I poſſibly can on every Thing you ſay, and ſhall be truly ſorry if in any Thing I have miſapprehended or miſrepreſented you, and beg

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it may be imputed to meer Frailty or any Thing rather than either Inſincerity or Malevolence.

I have been unavoidably led to theſe melancholly Reflections from obſerving the Manner in which you manage this Controverſy both with my Brethren and me, which, as it appears to me, may, in a great Meaſure, be reduced to theſe two Heads.——— Your firſt Care ſeems to be to beget in the Minds of your inconſiderate Readers, as great an Odium as ever you can, that they may be prejudiced againſt every Thing we ſay, and ſo diſaffected as not to be qualified for giving an honeſt Attention to the true Merits of the Cauſe.— And ſecondly, when you are brought to the Pinch of the Argument, you artfully diſguiſe the Caſe, and many times aſk us "What we mean," by this or that, and then contrive a Meaning which we never dream'd of, over which you will gain a cheap and eaſy Triumph, while you are really fighting with nothing but a Duſt of your own raiſing.— At this Rate there can be nothing that may not be anſwered, nor can there be any End of anſwering: And after all you have ſaid, unprejudiced Men of plain common Senſe, may find enough in the Books you have been writing againſt, wherewith to anſwer every Thing of any Weight you have been offering againſt them. And I muſt beg of your Readers, in Juſtice to themſelves as well as to us, if poſſible, to procure and read our Books, which you have been ſo roughly handling, and conſider the whole of them, and compare them carefully with what you have wrote againſt them.

Thus, with Regard to the firſt Inſtance of your Way of Writing.— My Brother *Canter* is a *blind Guide of the Blind*.— My Brother *Heath*, is,— 1. No true Church-man. 2. No true Proteſtant. 3. No true Chriſtian. 4. A meer Mad-man, and beſides himſelf, or one that knows not how to talk conſiſtently with himſelf.——— Now Sir, are you really at Sport in all this? Or have you truly this Opinion of theſe Gentlemen your ſelf?— I can hardly think you have.— And would you then have unwary People have this Opinion of them? If you would, I muſt aſſure them, you would have them think very untruly and injuriouſly of them.— And by the Way, I would obſerve, that this Method of your's in raiſing an Odium againſt an Adverſary is a very antiquated and unpo-

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lite Way of managing a Controverſy. — It was the Faſhion about the Middle of the laſt Century, and followed by ſome gruff Sort of People ſince, but has, of late, been intirely diſuſed, even in diſputing with the Infidels themſelves, by all honeſt and polite Writers, who attend to nothing but the real Merits of the Cauſe: And that for this good ſcriptural Reaſon, That *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of GOD*.— And if theſe Gentlemen were indeed the poor, blind, popiſh, inconſiſtent Creatures your Diſcourſe repreſents them to be, I beg to know what all this is to the real Purpoſe of the Argument? It is not the Perſons, whether they be this, or that, or t'other, but the real Point in Queſtion which alone deſerves to be conſidered.—What then can this Method tend to, but meerly to prejudice People againſt giving them a fair Hearing?--- And yet this is the main Drift and Tendency of above half of this extraordinary Performance of your's.

But I go on to the Conſideration of what I am my ſelf more immediately concerned in; the Bulk of which you have left wholly untouch'd.— And *Firſt*, as to Matters of *Odium*, Among which, the firſt Thing I would take Notice of, is your charging me with miſunderſtanding and miſrepreſenting the State of the Queſtion, between Mr. *Cooke* and me: Mr. *Cooke*, you ſay, "Conſiders fallen Man only as the Object of "GOD's Sovereignty, and I, his Creatures, as ſuch," P. 65. Now to this I anſwer. It is nothing to the Purpoſe of the Argument whether Mr. *Cooke* or *I*, were the Perſons immediately concerned in the Controverſy, or whether I had exactly repreſented his particular Notions or not;— My Buſineſs and Deſign was under feigned Names, to guard againſt the wrong Notions of GOD and the Goſpel that obtain in the Country, and you know that I have not miſrepreſented the Notions of Multitudes among us at this Day.——— However I will appeal to any one, that reads that Sermon whether there are not many Paſſages in it without this Limitation; and to your own Conſcience, whether you your ſelf do not underſtand them as I do: Which that you do, is plain from your own Words, P. 74. Where you ſay, "Thus I have conſidered the Dr's "Arguments againſt the Sovereignty of GOD's Grace, AS "repreſented in Mr. *Cooke*'s Sermon."——— And you very well know, that whether *Adam* ſhould ſtand or fall, depended

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(according to *Calvin* and the Synod of *Dort*, which is your and his Doctrine †) as meerly upon the Sovereignty of GOD, as whether he or any of his Poſterity ſhould ever be recovered. Whether Man be conſider'd as ſtanding or fallen, alters not the Caſe: The Difficulty is only put a little further out of Sight, but not altered or removed, ſince the Sin and Fall of *Adam*, as well as the Sin and Damnation of any of his Poſterity, muſt have been equally and arbitrarily decreed by him, who (as you teach) decreed or "*fore-ordained whatſoever* "*comes to paſs.*"

Another Inſtance of this Artifice of your's in Diſputing by raiſing an *Odium*, is in P. 69. Where you ſay of me, "Does "he then treat the dreadful Majeſty of Heaven and Earth "with a Reverence becoming his holy Profeſſion and Cha- "racter, when *he ſpeaks* of GOD's having a formed Deſign "of laying the greateſt Number of his Creatures under a Ne- "ceſſity of being miſerable, and of his being acted by a moſt "ſelfiſh View, and of his manifeſt Double-dealing, &c?" — Now I humbly truſt, my Brother *Jonathan*, that I have as great a Reverence for the dreadful Majeſty of Heaven and Earth as you can be ſuppoſed to have; and I muſt think as much greater, as I am at the utmoſt Diſtance from *ſpeaking of him* in ſuch a Manner as this: And I know every intelligent Reader; and your ſelf too, muſt be ſenſible that I meant thoſe Expreſſions only as evident Conſequences of Mr. *Cooke*'s and your Doctrine: Yet this you have concealed in the Manner of your ſetting them down, and left it ſo that the Vulgar, who are the Bulk of your Readers, would be apt to think theſe were really my own Sentiments in my own Words, which if they were, they muſt be ſure to raiſe in them a very great and juſt Odium and Abhorrence towards me.—— Whereas GOD knows, and you muſt know, that it was my utmoſt Concern, and the great End of my Writing, to ſecure the Minds of poor miſtaken People from entertaining ſuch injurious and odious Apprehenſions of him, which they cannot avoid being tempted to, while they believe your Notions of his Sovereignty.——— You ought therefore, if poſſible, to have cleared theſe from being juſt Conſequences of your own

† See Mr. *Beach*'s Anſwer.

Doctrine, (which I am perſuaded you never can do,) than to break out into ſuch tragical Exclamations, and leave People to imagine them to be my Notions of the Deity, when they are neceſſarily implied in your own.

The laſt Inſtance of this Kind, I ſhall take Notice of, is, in P. 77. where you quote my Words, *GOD muſt know every Thing as being what it is, neceſſary Events as being neceſſary, and contingent Events as being ſuch.*— And you add upon it, "I am ſurprized to find a Gentleman of the Doctor's Ca-"pacity talk at this Rate! Does he indeed think there is "any Thing contingent with Reſpect to GOD?"— Where, by *Contingent*, you will mean *uncertain*, though I plainly meant Events depending on the free Actions of the Creatures. —— Now Sir, I am equally ſurprized to find a Gentleman of your Capacity talk at this Rate!——— Do you indeed think that I imagine there is any Thing contingent with Reſpect to GOD as you explain it?— I cannot think you do.— (Indeed I do not think there is any Thing *neceſſary* with Reſpect to GOD, beſides his own neceſſary Exiſtence and Perfections, and what neceſſarily reſults from them) But why then, my Brother *Jonathan*, and with what Conſcience, could you break out in this pretended, this awful Surprize, unleſs it were to ſet People a gaping at me, as a ſtrange unaccountable Mortal?—— And, in the Name of all that is fair and ingenious, how could you quote thoſe very Words that I uſe in the ſame Breath to explain my ſelf, as though they militated againſt me?— And pray tell me in your next; (for I perceive you are to write again and again) whether you yourſelf do not think, as well as I, that GOD, to whom nothing is uncertain, does not know all Things that are contingent (as well as neceſſary) with Regard to us as being ſuch?— And then ceaſe to be ſurprized.

By the Way; before I proceed, it will be highly expedient, for the Sake of common Readers, to define theſe Terms, *neceſſary* and *contingent*.— Now Events are then ſaid to be *neceſſary*, as to us, when they derive from the ſettled Courſe of Nature, the Laws of which are eſtabliſhed by the free Will, and invariably executed by the Almighty Power of GOD, having no Dependance on our Will, nor have we, at all, any Power over them, though they are meer arbitrary Conſtitutions of the

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Will of GOD conformable to the Dictates of his infinite Wiſdom, and therefore can be known to him only as being his own Eſtabliſhments.— Such are, The Deſcent of heavy Bodies to the Earth ;— The Revolutions of the Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Return of the Seaſons and Tides ;——— The Courſe of Vegetation and Senſation, and the Condition and Abilities of each Individual, &c.—— But by *Contingent* Events, we mean ſuch as depend on our own free Wills and Self-Exertions ; as that I am now writing, when I might, if I pleaſed, have been viſiting a Neighbour.— Theſe Things, being Fact, are as certain, and as certainly known, as the other ; but it by no Means follows that they are therefore neceſſary ; nor can they be, becauſe they immediately depend on our free Wills (who are intuitively conſcious of our free Agency) and not on the Will of GOD, (any otherwiſe than as our Exiſtence depends on his Will) who therefore does not know them becauſe he wills them ; but he therefore knows them becauſe they are, by his intuitive Knowledge, to which all Things, at once are preſent, in a Manner, indeed, which we can have no Notion of, though we can demonſtrate that it muſt be ſo.— Theſe Things therefore are contingent as depending on the Liberty of free Agents, and when future are uncertain with Reſpect to us, though they are certain with Reſpect to GOD : But his certain Knowledge of them alters not their Nature any more than our certain Knowledge of them when they are Facts, alters the Nature of them ; for he knows them as being what they are, i. e. as depending on the free Exertions of his Creatures, according to that voluntary, ſelf-exerting Nature which he hath given them.——— So that your Surprize is wholly owing to the Confuſion of your own Ideas ; your confounding Neceſſity with Certainty, and not diſtinguiſhing between Contingency and Uncertainty, and from your groundleſs Imagination, that GOD can no otherwiſe know Things than by his having willed them ; which is the ſame as to ſay, it muſt be ſo meerly becauſe you cannot conceive how it ſhould be otherwiſe.

This being premiſed, I proceed now in the next Place to conſider a few Things, (which indeed comprehend all the reſt) that are Matters of Argument between us : Of which, I ſhall begin with that which is the Foundation of the others, occaſion'd by this Confuſion of your Ideas, and is thus expreſſed

preſſed by you, a few Words before this great Surprize of your's.—— You tell us, "Unleſs we ſhould blaſphemouſly "ſuppoſe a Diſcord and Jarr among the Divine Attributes, "a Divine Decree, [i. e. an Act of the Divine Will] with "Reſpect to each individual Perſon, *neceſſarily* follows from "the Fore-knowledge, or the infinite, eternal Knowledge of "GOD."—— Now, I aſk whether there can be any other Meaning to theſe Words than this?— That GOD's fore-knowing a Thing to be, with Reſpect to each Individual, neceſſarily infers, that he muſt have willed it to be, or becauſe he knows it, he muſt neceſſarily will it? *i. g.* Becauſe GOD knew *Adam* would diſobey, therefore he muſt neceſſarily have willed his Diſobedience:—— Becauſe he knew *Judas* would reject and betray CHRIST, therefore he muſt neceſſarily have willed his Apoſtacy and Treachery: And for the ſame Reaſon he muſt neceſſarily will all the Sins and Crimes of each Individual that ever were and will be committed in the World.— Is this your Doctrine, Sir?— I believe, indeed you will not own it in ſo many Words.— But pray tell me, if it does not neceſſarily follow from it, and is not neceſſarily implied in it? Since you teach with the Aſſembly, That GOD hath foreordained, *i. e.* willed whatſoever comes to paſs. I beg Leave to aſk further, Whether GOD does not always approve and take Pleaſure in every Thing that he wills, and conſequently, whether, according to your Doctrine, he muſt not neceſſarily approve and take Pleaſure, not only in the Death, but alſo in the Sin of every Sinner, which is both contrary to all his moral Attributes, to the whole Scriptures, and to what he hath ſworn by himſelf, in *Ezek.* 33. 11.— Now what greater Jarr, what more manifeſt Diſcord, nay what more direct Oppoſition can there be than this Doctrine of your's makes between the natural and moral Attributes of GOD?— It ſhocks me, I confeſs, only to mention ſuch horrid Thoughts, which are infinitely impoſſible to be true: But I beſeech you Sir, how can it be, but they muſt be neceſſary Conſequences of this your Doctrine, That "a "divine Decree, with Reſpect to each individual Perſon, ne"ceſſarily follows from the infinite, eternal Knowledge of "GOD."—— I beg of you, for GOD's Sake, Dear Sir, who are ſo terribly afraid of Blaſphemy, that you will be afraid to aſſert ſuch Notions of the DEITY as do neceſſarily imply it! For my Part I can't but be of the Opinion that GOD muſt know a Thouſand Things with Reſpect to the free

free, voluntary Actions of each Individual, which it was impoſſible for him to will or decree in any Senſe. In ſhort, Sin muſt, in the very Nature of it, be the ſole Object of our own perverſe Wills, nor can it be the Object of his Will, *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.*

And give me Leave, Sir, upon this Occaſion, to ſuggeſt my Fears, whether this Doctrine, as you expreſs it, does not unavoidably make the Almighty a neceſſary Agent, (which is indeed a meer Contradiction in Terms:) for if GOD's Decrees neceſſarily follow from his Fore-knowledge, muſt he not *neceſſarily* will or decree every Thing that he knows will be, and if ſo, muſt he not *neceſſarily* act in every Thing that is? For what is acting in the Deity but exerting his Almighty Will? † This Notion therefore ſeemeth to me too plainly to infer that there can be no ſuch Thing as Liberty or free Agency in GOD, nor indeed in any of his Creatures.— If ſo, it muſt be of the ſame Nature with that of Mr. *Collens*, one of the famous Infidel Authors of the *Independent Whigg*, who gave out in Converſation, as I was told by One preſent, That he had found out a Demonſtration againſt the Being of a GOD.‡ And what ſhould it be, but what he publiſhed a few Years after, *viz*, what he called, *A Diſſertation on Liberty and Neceſſity*, wherein he pretends to demonſtrate that every Action in every Creature, is neceſſarily what it is: And his Arguments equally prove, as he deſigned they ſhould, that there can be no ſuch Thing as Liberty in any Being, whether GOD or Creature, and he argues from that very ſame Principle, which you, without any Proof take for granted, in P. 43. That "the Will neceſſarily follows the neceſſary Aſſent of the Mind," or is neceſſarily determined by the laſt Judgment of the Underſtanding, as one Ball is by the Motion of another Ball impinging againſt it.— Hence he demonſtrates, that there is no Liberty, and all is Fate; and thence it would follow, ſure enough that there is no GOD; for by a GOD we muſt mean, if we mean any Thing, an infinitely free, intelligent active Being, who is the great Creator and moral Governor of the World.— You may find the ſame abſurd Cauſe pleaded in the

† So you your ſelf explain it, P. 67. Line ult.

‡ Vid. Advertiſement to the *Minute Philoſopher*.

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celebrated *Cato*'s Letters, written by Mr. *Trenchard*, another of thoſe famous Authors of the *Independent Whigg*, Vol. IV. P. 168, &c. where he uſes juſt the ſame Arguments as you do here, and with the ſame Inconſiſtency and Self-Contradiction: And I would wiſh you and your Readers to read & conſider well Mr. *Jackſon*'s Anſwers to both theſe Authors, where he will find a complete Anſwer alſo to every Thing you have here alledged, on this Subject. — I am really grieved, my Brother *Jonathan*, that you ſhould be found in ſuch unhappy Company, and that any of your Notions ſhould be ſo nearly connected with their Doctrine of Fate, which is Atheiſm. At leaſt, it is too plain, though I believe you are not aware of it, that you, with theſe Authors, differ from us and the Generality of Chriſtians, eſpecially thoſe of the antient Church, in the very Notion of a GOD. And I will venture to ſay, That I have too much Reaſon to believe, that the GOD which ſome People have of late deſcribed in this Country, as the GOD whom they worſhip, is not the GOD of *Iſrael*, nor the GOD of Chriſtians.— The Liberty of the Divine Nature, (as well as all his other Perfections) is indeed a great, unfathomable Deep; but, as we are intuitively certain of our own Power of Self-Exertion and free Agency, ſo we can demonſtrate that GOD muſt be an infinitely free Agent, together with his other natural and moral Perfections, though it be infinitely beyond us to conceive of the Manner of them. — It muſt therefore, ſurely, be *darkening Counſel, by Words without Knowledge*, to imagine, that aſſerting the Liberty of the Divine Will, will infer a Jar among His Attributes, which you ſay, will be the Caſe, unleſs his Decrees *neceſſarily* follow from his infinite Knowledge: The Jarr is not in his Attributes, but in ſuch idle Notions as theſe.—

I had ſaid, as you quote, P. 66, 67. That Mr. *Cooke*'s which is alſo your Notion of the Divine Sovereignty does, *in Effect repreſent GOD as laying his Creatures under a Neceſſity of being what they are, whether good or bad*, and conſequently happy or miſerable.—— In Anſwer to which, you aſk, "What does the Dr. mean by Neceſſity?" Now Sir, in Anſwer to this, I muſt ſay, I cannot for my Life ſee how you could be at a Loſs to underſtand what I mean.——And though I had clearly diſtinguiſhed between *Neceſſity* and *Certainty*, yet after a Deal of metaphyſical Chicane, which you make

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uſe of for two or three Pages in Order to miſunderſtand me' you will have it that all I can mean by *Neceſſity* is nothing elſe but *Certainy*.— But, if you muſt yet be to ſeek for what I mean by Neceſſity, I would let you know that I mean juſt what every Man of plain common Senſe means by it, *viz.* A State or Condition of Being in which a Man is ſo placed, that however freely he may be ſuppoſed to act, it is abſolutely out of his Power, by any Means that are allowed him, to think or act otherwiſe than he does, or to be otherwiſe than he *is*.— Perhaps you will underſtand me by ſome ſuch Inſtance as this. I will ſuppoſe ſome unhappy Wretch, born under, and intirely in the Power of an arbitrary ſovereign Prince, (if it were poſſible I would ſuppoſe him his Creature) who laid a Command upon him which he was ſo wicked as to break, as it was before deſigned he ſhould; or perhaps his great Crime was to be deſcended of a Great-Grand-Father, who had diſobeyed ſome Command of his, long before this poor Creature was born.— The Sovereign, I will ſuppoſe had beforehand abſolutely reſolved he ſhould be hanged: But for the Fancy of the Thing, or purely to pleaſe himſelf, and gratify a capricious Humour of his, commands him to lift a Weight of 10000 Pounds, and heave it to the Diſtance of a Mile, and tells him, if he will do this, he will give him an Eſtate of 10000 a Year; and if he will not do it, he ſhall certainly be hanged: And at the ſame Time, promiſes and deſigns him no Manner of Help or Means whereby he might be enabled to accompliſh it.— It is true he ſpeaks very kindly to him, and gives him ſeveral great *Encouragements*, expreſſed juſt like *Promiſes*:— He tells him, if he will be *up and doing he will be with him*, and that if he will tugg and ſtrive and pray for Help, *his Labour ſhall not be in vain*:— But he means theſe only for *Encouragements* to put the poor Creature upon the Struggle, becauſe he does not know but the Sovereign means ſomething by theſe *Encouragements*, and perhaps may help him at this dead Lift.——— However the Truth of the Matter at the Bottom is, that he never intends to help him, having beforehand abſolutely reſolved he ſhall be hanged, and without Help he can no more ſtir the Weight than create a World.—— Now I humbly conceive (and I would ſubmit it to your Judgment) that this unhappy Wretch is under a Neceſſity of diſobeying and being hanged.—— And

I can't for my Life think but every Man of common Senſe muſt think ſo as well as I.

Again, for the further Illuſtration of this Buſineſs of *Neceſſity*, I will moreover ſuppoſe, that this Sovereign has, from his own certain Knowledge and meer Motion pitched upon two or three Favourites among a 100 ſuch Criminals, upon each of which he is abſolutely reſolved to beſtow an Eſtate of 10000 a Year.—— He tells them, It is true, you deſerve to be hanged as well as the reſt; but if you will lift and heave this Weight, you ſhall have the Eſtate as above; and having certain Engines in his Power by which the Weight can be eaſily raiſed and projected, he puſhes them on in Spight of their Teeth, or, (to uſe your own Way of Speaking) he *invincibly influences* them (under which invincible Influence they are meerly paſſive) to make Uſe of thoſe Engines, which do the Buſineſs for them.—I know not what others may think, but to me it ſeemeth evident that theſe Perſons are under a Neceſſity of doing what they do, and being what they are; for as the Sovereign had ordered Matters, Things could not poſſibly be otherwiſe.—— I believe Sir, you may by theſe Inſtances underſtand *what I mean* by *Neceſſity*.—— And pray tell me in your next, whether thoſe poor Creatures firſt ſuppoſed are not under an invincible Neceſſity of diſobeying and being hang'd?—— And whether there was not manifeſt Double-Dealing in the Sovereign towards them?—— And whether any Thing but a meer ſelfiſh View at gratifying his own capricious Humour could put him upon ſuch a Management?—— And laſtly, Whether theſe Inſtances are not juſt Reſemblances of your own Doctrine?—— Not of the Conduct of the Deity; no, GOD forbid! But of your Repreſentation of it?—— Only the Caſe would have been much worſe, if the Sovereign could have been ſuppoſed to be the Creator, Father and Author of them.

And now I have thus fairly explained what I mean by *Neceſſity*, I beg Leave, in my Turn to aſk you, Sir, in the Name of plain common Senſe, what you mean, when you ſay, 1ſt. with regard to the Bad, P. 39. "He that neceſſarily "continues a wicked Creature, muſt neceſſarily, by that very "Means be the faulty Cauſe of his own Deſtruction?"—— Do you mean that a Man can properly be ſaid to be wicked in doing

doing what it is impoſſible for him not to do?——— Or that he is to Blame for doing what he neceſſarily does, and can't help it?——— And that it is fit and right that he ſhould be puniſhed with exquiſite and eternal Torments, for doing what it was never poſſible for him to avoid, or not doing what it was never poſſible for him to perform? ——— And 2ndly, When you ſay, with Reſpect to the Good, P. 43. "Though there be no Force in the Caſe, yet the Holy Spirit "*invincibly influences* the Will, ſo that the Sinner is *neceſſarily* "though *freely* drawn to CHRIST?"——— Do you mean that a Man can be ſaid to be *invincibly* wrought upon without *Force?*——Or to be neceſſitated to act freely, or to act both neceſſarily and freely in the ſame Act? i. e. That it is poſſible for the ſame Thing to be and not to be in the ſame Time?—— I can't but think when you have fairly anſwered theſe Queſtions, and cleared up thoſe Expreſſions ſo as to make plain Senſe of them, you and I ſhall ſoon come to a right Underſtanding of each other.——

I had ſaid, that I cannot reconcile it with the Wiſdom, Holineſs, Juſtice and Goodneſs of GOD to give Being to any of his Creatures without *putting them into a Condition that would render Being deſireable to them, or to put them into a Condition that is worſe than not to be, but for their own perſonal voluntary Fault in acting in Oppoſition to his holy Will.* P. 73. This you ſay is "nothing to the Purpoſe," with a 1ſtly, 2dly, 3dly and 4thly, all which I cannot think your intelligent Readers will think any Thing to the Purpoſe. However let them ſeriouſly conſider, and try and judge for themſelves.——— No Sir nothing, in my humble Opinion can be to the Purpoſe, but to eſtabliſh thoſe two Principles, which I told you good honeſt Dr. *Twiſſe*, in his ſcholaſtical Way, undertakes to maintain,† viz. 1ſt. *That it is better to be eternally miſerable than not to be*: And therefore, 2ndly, *That it may conſiſt with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of GOD to inflict exquiſite and endleſs Miſery upon innocent Creatures*, i. e. *ſuch as were never capable of formal or actual Sin.*——— In this now Dr. *Twiſſe* was downright honeſt; though I will not anſwer for the Soundneſs of his Intellect in maintaining theſe Points.

† See his *Vindiciæ Gratiæ*.

However he had Senſe enough to ſee that they were fundamental to his Scheme, which was the ſame with your's, and Mr. *Cooke*'s.—— And though I truſt that you are an honeſt Man too; yet perhaps it may be no great Derogation, to doubt whether you are quite ſo honeſt as he; for if you was, methinks you muſt have fallen to Work as he did, upon clearing up theſe fundamental Points: For who ſees not, that if theſe be not true, your's muſt be falſe?—— You indeed aſk, "Did not GOD when he gave Being to Man at firſt, "put him into a State that was much better than not to be?" I anſwer, I believe ſo Sir, but pray what is this to you, or to me, or any one elſe? Had we a Being when *Adam* fell?— Did we exiſt 70 Years ago?——— Did he not make you and me as well as *Adam*?—— And did he not then firſt give us our Being when we were conceived and born?— Is he not the *Father of our Spirits*, and the Former of our Bodies?— And as *Job* and *David* ſay, Hath *not his Hands made us and faſhioned us*?—— Were we not born juſt ſuch Creatures as he thought fit to make us?—— And did he not then put *us* into a State of Being better than not to be, every Thing conſidered?— I, for my Part am perſuaded he did; otherwiſe I could not thank him for my Creation, as I daily do; and ſo muſt every one elſe, I think, unleſs he *will charge GOD fooliſhly*.— For Fear of which, I dare not agree with the Aſſembly of Divines (whereof, if I remember right Dr. *Twiſſe* was Prolocutor) in their Notion of *Original Sin*, as expreſſed in their *larger Catechiſm*.— They ſay, It is ſuch a *Corruption of our Nature*, (meaning by *Nature* that Condition wherein we were born) *whereby*, ſay they, "*We are utterly indiſpoſed, diſabled and made oppoſite to all that is ſpiritually good, and wholly inclined to all Evil and that continually*." — Now what is this but a Deſcription of Devils incarnate, this indeed would be to be put into a Condition infinitely worſe than not to be—*made utterly oppoſite to all good, and wholly inclined to all Evil!* This is ſhocking indeed! And no Help, no Hope! Who could thank GOD for giving him ſuch a Being.*——— And accordingly even good Dr. *Watts*, in his *Ruin*

* We may reaſonably thank GOD for our Creation, altho' we find, we come into Being in a much leſs perfect Condition,

Ruin and *Recovery*, P. 368, 369, is ſo far miſled by theſe unſcriptural and unnatural Notions of Original Sin, as to ſay, That "an intelligent Creature cannot with Reaſon bleſs GOD "or give Thanks to the Author of his Being, for his Exiſt-"ence, cannot thank GOD for creating him."— Strange! that ſo good and ingenious a Man, after ſo many Rules as he has given to guard againſt Prejudices, ſhould be ſo far under the Influence of them as to entertain and inculcate ſuch Doctrine, and ſuch hard and unworthy Thoughts of the *Father of Mercies!*— For who ſees not, if he will but a little conſider, that it is impoſſible a holy and good GOD ſhould produce ſuch Beings, and that therefore we cannot do him a greater Injury and Diſhonour than to repreſent our Nature as being made ſuch as here deſcribed, when we firſt come out of his pure and holy Hands? And I muſt ſay, it is really ſurprizing that ſuch a grave Body of Divines ſhould teach ſuch Doctrine and alledge a Number of Texts to prove it, which ſpeak not of that Condition wherein we were made or born, but of the Condition of Men who by their own actual Sins had corrupted their Ways by knowingly and wilfully living in all Manner of Vice and Wickedneſs, as any one may ſee that reads and conſiders them carefully.— It is indeed ſorrowful to ſee, not only on this, but many other Heads, with what a ſtrange Inattention and Careleſſneſs, even many Divines read and quote the Holy Scriptures; firſt making Doctrines out of their own Heads, and then alledging a Number of the meer Sounds of Scripture to prove them, without any Attention to the real Senſe of it!— If there be ſome Texts that, at firſt

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Condition than we might have done if *Adam* had not fell, and though we are in a State much ſhort of that original perfect Law of our Nature which is called *original Righteouſneſs*: For our Being though imperfect, or leſs perfect, is yet deſirable. How much better then is the Moderation wherewith our Church hath expreſſed this Doctrine (who at the ſame Time teaches us to *thank GOD for our Creation*) in only ſaying, Art. 9. We are *very far gone from Original Righteouſneſs*, and *inclined to Evil*, (i. e. materially ſuch, *the Fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit*) than the *Aſſembly* in ſaying, We are *made* utterly *oppoſite to* all *Good, and* wholly *inclined to* all *Evil?*

Sight,

Sight, may ſeem to ſound harſhly, relating either to Original Sin or Predeſtination, we muſt not at all wonder at it; eſpecially in a literal Tranſlation as ours is, (the Tranſlators alſo, though great and good Men, being ſomewhat biaſſed in Favour of preconceived Schemes) ſince it requires in many Caſes, very great critical Skill to give a juſt Account of the Senſe of very ancient and dead Languages, and much Care in laying the Texts together on any Subject; by which Means, however, I muſt think there has, of late Years, been a very ſatisfactory Account given of all the Paſſages that relate to theſe difficult Subjects. And if there be ſome difficult Caſes in the Courſe of Providence, that may occur to us in thinking on theſe Subjects, ariſing from our partial Views and narrow Conceptions, we muſt not at all wonder at it, while we can ſee but a Part of Things, and therefore are not competent Judges of the whole, and in this our preſent State are obliged to *walk by Faith, and not by Sight.*— But for GOD's Sake let us take Care how we go into any Interpretations, Notions or Hypotheſes that do in the moſt odious Manner reflect upon the beſt of Beings! I would give into any poſſible Suppoſition rather than admit of any Notions inconſiſtent with his moral Character. We cannot always ſay what is, but we may, and muſt, in many Caſes ſay what is not, and cannot be conſiſtent with the moral Attributes of GOD.

I had ſaid as you quote, P. 75. That I think it neceſſary in Order to ſpeak intelligibly of the Divine Sovereignty, to diſtinguiſh between the Conſideration of GOD as a *Benefactor* and as a *Judge*: And that GOD acts as a Sovereign only with Regard to the Beſtowment or withholding of various Abilities and Favours on his Creatures as pleaſeth him, ſuppoſing firſt a Condition of Being better than not to be. Particularly with Regard to Mankind, His Sovereignty appears in the Beſtowment of various Abilities, Favours and Talents upon them, as proper Means of Probation in this Life; and that, therefore Sovereignty has nothing to do with our being made abſolutely happy or miſerable in the Life to come: For with Regard to our future State, according as both Reaſon and Scripture repreſent the Matter, he acts meerly as a Judge in rendering us variouſly happy or miſerable according as we ſhall have made a good or bad Uſe of the various Powers or Talents committed to our Truſt in this preſent State of Probation. —

" All this you ſay is very true, but it is difficult conceiving " to what Purpoſe it is alledged, unleſs to pull down with " one Hand what is built up with the other."— I anſwer; To me it is plain, that in ſaying, " All this is very true," you give up intirely your and Mr. *Cooke*'s Notion of GOD's Sovereignty, which conſiſts in a meer arbitrary determining the eternal Fate of each Individual of Mankind.— It is you, therefore, who by this Conceſſion do manifeſtly pull down what you had been labouring to build. For your neceſſitating Doctrine leaves no Room for the Being of any State of Probation at all; it being a Contradiction in Terms to ſay, a Man is in a State of Probation whether he will do or not do, what he can't but do.——— Nor does it leave any Room for GOD's acting as a Judge at all, unleſs it be meerly for an unmeaning Show: For, according to you, he had abſolutely and arbitrarily determined their eternal Fate already before they had a Being and had done either Good or Evil: and had ſo ordered Matters that they could not avoid doing the Good or Evil which they had done. What Senſe or Meaning then can there now be in his ſetting in Judgment upon them.——— So that as I ſaid in my former Letter, the 25th of St. *Matthew*, and ſuch like Texts, cannot, as far as I can ſee have any Place at all in your Divinity.

But you go on and ſay, " Does not GOD act as a *Bene-* " *factor* in the Donation of his ſpecial *Grace* to whom he " pleaſes." Where, by *ſpecial Grace*, you mean that *ſovereign, neceſſitating, invincible* Grace, as you call it, which was above repreſented.——— Now I agree, that if GOD does beſtow ſuch a Grace he does it indeed as a ſovereign Benefactor, and that your Notions of Sovereignty and abſolute Decrees are effectually eſtabliſhed: For what GOD does he doubtleſs decreed to do. For, as I ſaid in my former Letter, *The right Way of forming a juſt Notion of GOD's Decrees, is, to judge of them by the Facts before our Eyes.*— If, therefore, it be Fact, that by the Diſpoſition which GOD hath already made, or by any neceſſitating Influence of his on the one Hand, or with-holding it on the other, to each Individual, the Good are neceſſarily good and happy, and the Bad are neceſſarily bad and miſerable, GOD, doubtleſs abſolutely decreed it ſhould be ſo.——— So that, the whole Controverſy will undoubtedly turn upon this ſingle Point.— But can you

ſeriouſly

ſeriouſly lay it down for Doctrine, that every wicked Man that lives and dies in Sin, is neceſſarily wicked and conſequently miſerable.— This, indeed, muſt be the Caſe, unleſs (as we maintain) GOD has in CHRIST, abſolutely given to every Man a Meaſure of Grace *to profit withal*, which, if he will make Uſe of, in ſuch a Manner as can reaſonably be expected in his Circumſtances, he ſhall have more ſtill, and more, as he uſes it, till it iſſues in his Recovery and Happineſs, according to *Matthew* 25. 29.— I ſay unleſs you admit of this, every Sinner that is deſtitute of this invincible Grace, muſt neceſſarily continue ſuch, and be eternally miſerable; for we all agree that it is impoſſible for him to be reclaimed without GOD's Help.— If therefore GOD has abſolutely reſolved never to help him, he muſt neceſſarily die in his Sins.— But then who can blame him ſince it never was poſſible for him to do otherwiſe, and Miſery muſt have been the End for which he was made, and the Deſign in giving him a Being. But what mortal Man that knows and loves GOD can endure ſuch a ſhocking Thought?— It is therefore Demonſtration to me that you miſunderſtand the 9th of *Romans*, in the Paſſage you quote, P. 78, as well as others you mention; becauſe your Senſe of them is impoſſible to be true.— And the Meaning of that as well as others, is, I think, ſufficiently clear, in the Interpretation I gave of it, to which you ſeem very little to have attended. — But I refer you to my Brother *Beach*'s Anſwer to your *Vindication* upon this and many other Texts of Scripture.

And I can't but obſerve to you here, that I muſt think there can ſcarcely be a more miſchievous Doctrine advanced among Mankind than this neceſſitating Doctrine of your's; for it tends at once to deſtroy all Religion and Morality, and all Civil and Family Government, and render them unmeaning and ridiculous Things; for what ſignify all Laws and Rules of Action, all Motives taken from Praiſe or Blame, Hope or Fear, Reward or Puniſhment, while every Thing we do is under a fatal Neceſſity, and we can do no otherwiſe than we do. Let a Child, a Servant, or a Subject be but poſſeſſed with this Principle, that he can do no otherwiſe than he does, and in vain do you attempt to perſwade him to do better, and it muſt be the greateſt Injuſtice to puniſh him for doing worſe. And to what Purpoſe ſhould we pray to GOD

or uſe the Means of Grace if our Fate is before-hand ſo immutably fixed, that if it ſhould be already bad, theſe Means can only make it worſe? In ſhort, in your Way, we have nothing to do but to wait for this invincible Grace, which if it never comes, all we can do will ſtand for nothing, and when it comes, it will do our Buſineſs for us let us do what we will :—— And when once it has brought us into a good Eſtate, we ſtill have nothing to trouble our ſelves about, for it is now as impoſſible for us ever to fail of Happineſs, as it was before to do any Thing towards it. So that throughout our whole Lives, it has a natural Tendency to tempt us to ſlacken all our Cares and Prayers and Watchfulneſs. This I muſt think is really the Caſe; and it is the greateſt Mercy, that theſe Notions are ſo very abſurd, that however People, through the Prejudice of Education, or from the Authority of thoſe they have a great Veneration for, think themſelves obliged to believe them in Theory, yet from an inward, native Senſe of Truth and Right, they dare not venture upon them in Practice.—

You have indeed determined this Queſtion in the Affirmative, and aſſerted, (without either Nature or Scripture to juſtify you, and as I humbly conceive in Oppoſition to both, and to your ſelf too, you have aſſerted) that this Grace is *invincible*, though you ſay, there is no *Force* in it, but *invincible* it is, and therefore neceſſitating: And ſo he that is without it, is under a Neceſſity of continuing in Sin; for without this invincible Grace it is impoſſible for him to alter his State; as impoſſible as for a dead Man to ariſe out of his Grave.—— Where it is given it is arbitrarily given; and where it is with-held it is arbitrarily with-held; and where it is with-held the Sinner can no more ceaſe to Sin, than he can ceaſe to exiſt; nor is there any Promiſe of Help to his beſt Endeavours.——— Is it not ſo, Sir, according to you? — But can it indeed be thus? Is it poſſible, unleſs there be, as I ſaid, a manifeſt double Dealing in all the Offers of Mercy made to Mankind?—You ſay, indeed, P. 73. "The "Sovereignty of GOD's Grace is no *Hindrance* to any Man "living from a Compliance with the Terms of Salvation: "Every one who is truly willing, *&c*, will be a Partaker of "it; and if he is not, *whoſe Fault* is it?——— True; But according to your Doctrine, he cannot be willing without

a ſovereign invincible Grace: And then, if he be not willing, it is meerly becauſe GOD does not think fit to beſtow it. You allow, "He may accept if he will."—Yes, but according to you he can no more will to accept than he can create a World.——— Pray ſee, Sir, what your Argument comes to: Can this be any Thing elſe but tantalizing common Senſe.

For, (that I may give a ſummary Anſwer to the remaining Part of your *Vindication*) Tell me I beſeech you, are not theſe Offers and *Encouragements*, (as you pleaſe to call them, though GOD calls them *Promiſes*) are they not equally made to all, as well to the Bad as the Good, the Reprobate as the Elect?——— Was not *Judas* as much obliged to believe them made to him as *Peter*? ——— But according to your Doctrine, were they ever intended for him? ——— Was not *Judas* to Blame for rejecting them? ——— But according to your Tenet, was it ever in his Power, with what Grace was given him, to accept of them?— I beg of you to ſpeak out and anſwer me theſe plain Queſtions; which if you fairly and honeſtly do, it is plain to me that you will anſwer all that you your ſelf have ſaid here againſt the Promiſes.——— And, for GOD's Sake, tell me then, Whether your Doctrine does not, by unavoidable Conſequence, deſtroy the Covenant of Grace?— For, does not a Covenant, in the very Nature of it, ſuppoſe Conditions?— And can there be Offers and Promiſes made, with any honeſt Meaning, to Conditions impoſſible to be performed?— Has GOD promiſed ſovereign invincible Grace any where in the new Covenant? Or is every one that is in a good Eſtate, converted by a Meaſure of Grace that GOD never covenanted to beſtow? It is ſo indeed, according to this Doctrine of your's: But then what Meaning can there be in the Covenant of Grace? And what will the Infidel ſay to ſuch Repreſentations of GOD and the Goſpel as this Doctrine makes? Is this the GOD you would have me to worſhip?— Is this the Goſpel you would perſwade me to embrace?

But let me inquire further:— Are not all baptized Chriſtians in Covenant with GOD?—— May not they then, at leaſt, plead the Promiſes of GOD.——— You ſay no; unleſs they be already actually and indefectably good Men. ——

But

But tell me then what Senſe there can be in their being ſaid to be in Covenant, if there are no Promiſes made to them in that Covenant? — What Advantage hath the baptized Perſon beyond him that *is an Alien to the Covenant of Promiſe?* You ſay, "It is *in* CHRIST *that all the Promiſes are Yea and Amen*, (P. 79.) and wicked Men are not in CHRIST, therefore there are no Promiſes to them.—— I anſwer, It is true, wicked Men are not in CHRIST in the ſpiritual inviſible Senſe; but if they are baptized and not excommunicated, they are in CHRIST, as to their viſible ſtanding, being viſible Members of his viſible Body, and muſt be conſidered as being in Covenant, and conſequently have, through CHRIST, a Right to plead the Promiſes of GOD's Help to their ſincere Endeavours, while they continue in this preſent State of Trial, and are favoured with the New Covenant Diſpenſation. —— And I muſt ſtill maintain that they may ſincerely pray and endeavour by the Help of common or preventing Grace, tho' their Endeavours will not be effectual without GOD's further Aſſiſtance, which I inſiſt is by Promiſe engaged in the New Covenant, and will certainly be granted on thoſe Conditions: And thoſe Promiſes *Mat.* 7. 7, &c. will yet ſtand good to ſuch, notwithſtanding all the Quibbles you make Uſe of to elude them.—— But Sir, to me it is plain that you utterly miſunderſtand that Expreſſion of the *Promiſes being in* CHRIST *Yea and Amen.*——Does the Apoſtle ſay *the Promiſes are Yea and Amen*, to thoſe only that are in CHRIST?— No, he ſays no ſuch Thing:— He ſays the *Promiſes are in* CHRIST, or, (as the Word in the Original means) they are *by* or *through* CHRIST, i. e. by his Purchaſe, and through his Mediation, they *are Yea and Amen*. To every one; not to thoſe only who are already in CHRIST, but to all Mankind, *they are Yea and Amen*, i. e. they are certainly to be depended upon.

But ſuppoſe all this were allowed, you will ſtill reply, What ſhall we ſay of thoſe who never heard of CHRIST?— Are not they, by the ſovereign Diſpoſal of Almighty GOD, laid under an abſolute Neceſſity of continuing in Sin and being eternally miſerable? See P. 66.—— I anſwer, By no Means.——— It is, indeed, by the ſovereign Diſpoſal of GOD (as I allowed before) that they are deſtitute of the ineſtimable Talent of the Goſpel, or the explicit Knowledge of a Saviour: Which I never doubted to be conſiſtent with the moral Attributes and

moral Government of the Almighty; but I muſt not think that they are therefore neceſſarily ſinful and miſerable to all Eternity. The Apoſtle's Diſcourſe, in Rom. 2. 13, &c. ſuppoſeth that they are in a Capacity of *doing by Nature the Things contained in the Law, and that having not the Law*, i. e. by explicit Revelation, explaining it in all the Branches of it, yet, ſo far as the Light of Reaſon or Tradition extends, *they are a Law to themſelves, and ſhew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſciences alſo bearing Witneſs, and their Thoughts accuſing or excuſing them*, i. e. according as their Behaviour is conformable or contrary to the inward Senſe of their own Minds or Conſciences; (which to them is the Law of GOD;) but this could not be the Caſe, if they were under an abſolute Neceſſity of living and dying in Sin: So that their Caſe, bad as it is, I hope, is not ſo utterly deſperate and deplorable as you ſeem to apprehend it.— But, I would humbly beg Leave to aſk you on this Head, Whether Men may not be ſaid to be ſaved by CHRIST who never heard of him?— Or whether an explicit Knowledge of CHRIST is abſolutely neceſſary in Order to enjoy the Benefit of that Redemption which he hath purchaſed?—— If you ſay ſo; I would aſk, How then can any Infants at all be ſaved?——— You doubtleſs allow ſome may; and if they may be ſaved without the explicit Knowledge of CHRIST, being uncapable of it, why not others to whom it was equally impoſſible to come to the Knowledge of him; not through any Fault of theirs, for which, therefore, they ſhall never have to anſwer, but meerly by the ſovereign Diſpoſal of the Almighty.— And why may we not ſuppoſe and hope that GOD will deal with them according to the gracious Tenor of the Covenant of Grace, purchaſed equally by CHRIST for all Mankind, altho' they are not favoured with the explicit Knowledge and Seals of it?— *Is he the GOD of the* Jews *only*, ſays St. *Paul*, Rom. 3. 29. And I may, for the ſame Reaſon ſay, Is he the GOD of the Chriſtians only? *Is he not the GOD of the* Gentiles *alſo?*— Doubtleſs he is the common Father of all Mankind, and *the ſame LORD over all, is rich unto all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works*, (Rom. 10. 12. Pſal. 145. 9.) And he hath expreſly declared that, *Every Man ſhall be accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. (which is there ſet down as a general and eternal Rule of Equity) and that he is *no Reſpecter of Perſons*,

Perſons, but, in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs is accepted with him. (Acts 10. 34, 35.) doubtleſs through the great Mediator, (who equally *taſted Death for every Man*, Heb. 2. 9.) though not explicitly known: For whoſe Sake he will alſo make all the tender and merciful Allowances for their unavoidable Errors, Miſtakes and Failings, which can conſiſt with their being in any tolerable Meaſure qualified for his Favour.

If they have not the explicit Knowledge of the Goſpel, they ſhall never be called to an Account for it; for *where there is no Law, there can be no Tranſgreſſion*, Rom. 4. 15. As they have only the Light of Nature to guide them, ſo GOD will expect only ſuch a Conformity to it as their Abilities and Circumſtances will admit of: For *he is not a hard Maſter, expecting to reap where he hath not ſowed, or to gather where he hath not ſtrawed.* Mat. 25. 24.— If *having not known their LORD's Will*, ſo expreſly as we do, *they have done Things worthy of Stripes, they ſhall be beaten with* but *few.* Luke 12. 48.— And if they are not under Advantage to be qualified for that bleſſed State which ſhall be the peculiar Reward of good *Chriſtians*; yet, I hope they may, Multitudes of them be qualified for ſuch a Condition of Being in another World, as ſhall be very deſireable and capable of further *Improvement.* Nay CHRIST tells us expreſly, Mat. 8. 11. That *many ſhall come from the Eaſt and Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with* Abraham, Iſaac *and* Jacob *in the Kingdom of Heaven*: *When the Children of the Kingdom*, i. e. who were diſobedient and impenitent, *ſhall be caſt out into utter Darkneſs*, &c. He moreover aſſures us, (Joh. 14. 2.) That in *his Father's Houſe there are many Manſions.* — There are therefore, undoubtedly, inferior Manſions for thoſe that are, by his ſovereign Diſpoſal, inferior, but well-meaning Creatures, who, by his Help, have conſcientiouſly lived up to what Light they had, as far as their Frailty would admit, (of which there have been many remarkable Inſtances in the *Heathen* World) as well as various higher and more glorious Manſions for thoſe who, by Means, of the peculiar Helps and Advantages of Chriſtianity, had Opportunity to be qualified for them.——— May it not be ſo? ——— However they are in the Hands of a good and merciful GOD, who is *alike* the Father of all immortal Spirits; and in his Hands we may ſafely leave them; in whom we

may

may implicitly and ſecurely confide, that he will find out Ways to juſtify his own Conduct, and that the *Judge of all the Earth will do nothing but what is right*, and that *every Mouth ſhould be ſtopped* in the great Day, not by Dint of ſovereign arbitrary and uncontroulable Power, but, by an inward Conviction of the Equity, Fitneſs and Reaſonableneſs of all his Proceedings, with Regard to the Condition of every Individual of his Creatures.—I would therefore, as I ſaid, admit of any poſſible Suppoſition, rather than of any Thing that may ſo much as ſeem inconſiſtent with his moral Character.

I will add no more but my earneſt Wiſhes, That we may, on all Sides, be above all Things careful, for the Sake of the Love of GOD, (which is my greateſt Motive in Writing,) that we do by no Means advance or inculcate any Notions or Doctrines that may reflect Diſhonour upon that beſt of Beings, and upon the Goſpel of his Grace, or be any Ways detrimental to any of the Souls which he hath made! And that I am, with the utmoſt Sincerity,

Sir,

Your faithful Friend,

And humble Servant,

S. JOHNSON.

New-Year's Day,
1746,7.

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